



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM WEEKLY REPORT

To: Interested Parties

From: FWP Wolf Program Coordinator, Carolyn Sime (406-461-0587)

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, September 12 - 18, 2009

Contributors to the Montana Wolf Weekly are Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Universities, USDA Wildlife Services (WS), the National Park Service (NPS; Glacier NP; Yellowstone National Park will be reported in the Wyoming Wolf Weekly), US Forest Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Blackfeet Nation.

Highlighted activities relate to: monitoring, wolf – livestock interactions, outreach and education, research, law enforcement, and other miscellaneous topics of public interest. The Weekly Report will be available on each Monday, covering the previous week. It and other wolf program information (including the 2008 annual report) can be found at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Wolf Monitoring Activities

The wolf field team is still working throughout their areas of responsibilities to investigate wolf reports, verify wolf activity and trap when possible. FWP encourages the public and private landowners to help with monitoring the population by reporting wolf sightings, wolf scat, or tracks on the FWP Wolf webpage.

Flights: None this week.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

Catching up: On 9/2, FWP referred a call to WS from a livestock owner with cattle east of Feely. The owner had reported 1-2 dead calves. The owner was contacted by WS and they agreed that a field investigation was not warranted due to limited evidence.

Catching up: On the 9/3, WS and BFN biologist Carney investigated a dead calf near Horse Lake on the Blackfeet Reservation, in the area of the Livermore Pack. They determined wolves had killed the calf. For several days, they tracked the collared wolf in the pack near the kill site and determined that there were at least 6 wolves in the pack, possibly more. On the 9th, WS killed 2 adult wolves both within 1/2 mile of the depredation site.

Catching up: On 9/9, WS investigated a report of a calf being killed by wolves southwest of Augusta. WS concluded that it was a probable wolf kill. The Monitor Mtn. pack has been noted in the area recently. No lethal management action will occur and FWP/WS will continue to monitor wolf activity. The ranch is utilizing a range rider due to recent grizzly bear and wolf activity in the area.

On 9/15, WS investigated a report of multiple cattle as being killed by wolves south of Dillon near Clark Canyon Reservoir. It was unconfirmed as predation by wolves or other species and actual cause of death is unknown.

On 9/15, WS completed the lethal control effort to remove the second of 2 wolves in the Horn Mtn pack in southwest Montana. One wolf was opportunistically darted and fitted with a radio collar.

Outreach and Education

On 9/15, Sime gave a update / presentation to the FWP Region 5 Citizen's Advisory Council (Billings). About 20 people attended.

Research Activities

Nothing to report at this time.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

Nothing to report at this time.

Other Updates

Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation

On 9/8, Judge Molloy (Missoula) issued an order denying the request for a preliminary injunction. The Judge determined that the plaintiffs did not show and prove irreparable harm if the hunting seasons in MT and ID were allowed to occur in fall of 2009. However, the Judge did determine that the Plaintiffs are likely to be able to show that they are likely to prevail during the main part of the delisting lawsuit. Among other things, the Judge stated concerns with leaving a portion of the Northern Rockies Distinct Population still listed (i.e. State of Wyoming). A scheduling order was issued by the Judge on 9/15. Written briefings by all parties are to be completed by late January 2010. A hearing date for oral arguments has not been scheduled yet, but is expected to occur sometime thereafter.

Thus, barring a successful appeal to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals by the plaintiffs (has not occurred as of 9/18 and not likely to occur), the 2009 MT wolf hunting season will continue as outlined in the final 2009 regulations approved by the FWP Commission. Montana state laws, administrative rules, and the state plan will stay in effect.

Background: Delisting in the northern Rocky Mountains (except Wyoming) took effect 5/4/09. On 6/2, a coalition of 13 groups challenged the USFWS delisting decision in Federal District Court in Missoula (9th Circuit). The complaint alleges the USFWS delisting decision was an arbitrary and capricious violation of the federal Endangered Species Act for a variety of reasons. The Greater Yellowstone Coalition also filed a lawsuit challenging the federal delisting decision. The groups will be represented by their own attorneys, respectively, but the cases were consolidated by the Court. On 7/31, Montana / MFWP was granted intervenor status allowing full participation in the legal proceedings. Other intervenors supporting the federal government are: the State of Idaho / Idaho Fish and Game Department, Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, Safari Club International, and Montana Farm Bureau Federation / Idaho Farm Bureau Federation / Mountain States Legal Foundation. On 8/20, a preliminary injunction request was filed, requesting that wolves be placed back on the Endangered Species list while the court decides the main case within the next year – thus preventing a fall hunting season in Montana and Idaho. On 8/28, all parties filed written documents in support / opposition to the injunction request to the Court by noon. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation was granted permission to file a “friend of the Court” brief in opposition to the

preliminary injunction request and also did so on 8/28. The hearing on the preliminary injunction occurred on 8/31. The injunction request was denied on 9/8.

Additionally, the State of Wyoming filed a lawsuit in the 10th Circuit (Cheyenne Wyoming) challenging USFWS's rejection of Wyoming's regulatory framework and state plan. Written briefings and oral arguments are expected to be completed by late January 2010.

Montana 2009 Wolf Hunting Season:

FWP started selling wolf licenses on 8/31. As of 9/18 at about 3:15pm, FWP had sold a total of 9,353 total resident and non-resident licenses. The early season wilderness backcountry areas (Deer/Elk Hunting Districts 150, 151, 280, and 316 – the west side of the Bob Marshall / Scapegoat wilderness complex and the Absaroka-Beartooth wilderness area) opened on 9/15 for deer, elk, black bear, lion, and wolf. These are smaller geographical areas within the larger Wolf Management Units. In the first few days of backcountry hunting through 9/18, three wolves were reported harvested. One on 9/15 and one on 9/17 in the Absaroka-Beartooth wilderness area (WMU 3). A third wolf was reported as being harvested on 9/18 in the west Bob Marshall Complex near Soakem Mountain (Middle Fork of the Flathead River, within WMU 1).

All three were reported through the mandatory phone line reporting system so that FWP can rigorously track harvest. Successful hunters have 10 days to present a skull and pelt for full registration and inspection. More detailed information is collected at that time. These hunters are not expected to come out of the backcountry for a few more days as the average elk hunter hunts for about a week in these remote areas. Wolves harvested during the early backcountry seasons count toward the total quota for the entire WMU. For the latest harvest status information, call 1-800-385-7826.

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

The next Board meeting is scheduled for October 23 in Room 152, Montana Capital Building. Interested persons can listen on the Internet. The meeting time and agenda will be announced. The program coordinator can be reached at 444-5609.

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To learn more about Montana's wolf population, the Montana program and to help FWP monitor wolves by reporting wolf sign, visit FWP at: www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf.

To anonymously report a dead or injured wolf or suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.

To request an investigation of injured or dead livestock, call USDA Wildlife Services directly in western Montana / Helena area at 458-0106 or in eastern Montana at the statewide office: 657-6464. Or, call your nearest FWP representative to have your call referred to Wildlife Services.

If you have a confirmed or probable livestock loss due to wolves, USDA Wildlife Services will supply you with a copy of the Loss Reimbursement Application form. For more information, see <http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp>. Or, contact the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator George Edwards at the Montana Department of Livestock at 444-5609.